

Individuals were noted carrying mud. That the birds were breeding was confirmed by Mr. S. R. White, of Morawa.

A third group nesting under shop verandahs was located at Northampton on September 18, 1948 by several members of the R.A.O.U.

These are the only occasions upon which I have found Tree Martins nesting in wooden buildings.

—ERIC H. SEDGWICK, Caron.

A Record of the Leopard Seal in Western Australia.—The Leopard Seal (*Hydrurga leptonyx*) is an occasional wanderer to southern Australian seas from the Antarctic, but though many records have been reported from the south-east of the continent, there has been none so far from Western Australia. The first undoubted observation of an individual of this species locally was recently reported to Mr. G. W. Rayner of the C.S.I.R., and myself by Mr. D. S. Hunt of Hunt's Canning Company. Mr. Hunt said that on October 12, 1948, he was patrolling the south coast beaches in his Moth aeroplane, searching for salmon shoals. When flying over Tooregullup Beach, about one mile south of the Gairdner River bar (just north of Doubtful Island Bay), he saw a group of people tugging at the tail of a curious seal-like animal. He circled around and made a landing on the beach. The persons there called the animal a leopard seal and said they had come on it lying on the beach, clear of the water. It slowly moved off as they approached and they endeavoured to hold it by grasping its tail. However the creature escaped and swam away vigorously. It made no attempt to bite at its would-be captors.

Mr. Hunt describes the animal as being about 11 feet in length, of a brownish-grey colour, dappled on the sides of the body with darker spots. It looked like a seal but appeared thinner and longer. The head was much bigger than a seal's and seemed disproportionately large compared with the size of the body. The two front flippers also seemed small for the body size. "A curious aspect of the animal was that its tail appeared to be not unlike that of a platypus." The teeth were large and formidable. Mr. Hunt at once recognised the photograph in Fig. 14 of *The Wild Animals of Australasia*, by A. S. Le Souef and H. Burrell, as portraying the creature.

—D. L. SERVENTY, Perth.

A Bull-ant Combat.—On June 19, 1948 about 5 p.m., while taking a bush walk I came on several nests of the bull-ant, known under a variety of local names such as sergeant ant, soldier ant, bulldog, inch ant and jumping ant (*Myrmecia vindex*). They were a short distance apart and in most cases the ants were out foraging in the pleasant evening sunshine. At one nest I noticed two ants, one of which seemed to be trying to drag the other with it, over leaves and sticks, up a small prickly bush and down again to the

ground. They appeared to be locked in combat. I collected the two of them into a tin and continued my walk. On my way back I saw two more ants gripping each other with their barbed jaws. I took my specimens home, and at the time they were gripping fast at each other's jaws, not letting go for fresh grips, but hanging on, pushing and pulling, or being pulled. At 9 p.m. they still held the same grip.

Next morning at 8 a.m. they were still at it! At 10 a.m. they broke their holds for a few moments, but almost immediately gripped again. I placed them on a sheet of newspaper and held a string tightly between them but they would not release their hold on each other. There was no change in the fighting at noon. One ant was slightly smaller than the other, and for this reason was pushed about more freely, but for all that he seemed to be the more tenacious and aggressive. At 3 p.m. I again set them free on a sheet of paper. For a while they parted and started running about. I recaptured each and placed them in separate containers. There was a great deal of face and body rubbing with the antennae, the barbed jaws also receiving attention. At 8.30 p.m. I decided to see if they would continue the fight, so placed them together again. Immediately the larger one rushed in and secured a body hold on its opponent; the other one had a fore leg grip. There was much waving of legs and body arching, frequent contacts being made with the hinder ends of their bodies.

Next day, on the third day of the combat as witnessed by me, the battle was still on, the smaller ant still retaining its leg-hold. At 11 a.m. the bigger ant seemed to have had enough and had let go its grip. I thought that it would have left the fight now if it could but the small ant had a strong leg grip. It was holding on upside down, still hanging on to its adversary's foreleg which it gripped the previous night. The big ant made several efforts to get away but without success. At noon the fight was still in progress. Three hours later the fight was almost over. The small ant was dying. When turned out on a sheet of paper the victor left it and rubbed itself with its antennae. Some sugar was placed near it and the ant seemed to enjoy the titbit. It appeared to have plenty of strength and waved its antennae threateningly when a finger came near. Later it was put back with the other ant, which was now dead, but apart from giving it a look over, left it alone. A small piece of raw steak was given to the ant and it could be seen feeding on it.

On the afternoon of the following day I re-visited the ants' nest. There were a few foraging amongst the sticks and leaves but there did not appear to be any fighting, nor were there any bodies lying about. The victor of the fight was also now dying although it had been given good attention while under observation.

—(Mrs.) M. B. MILLS, Merredin.

[Specimens of ants forwarded were identified by Mr. C. F. H. Jenkins (Government Entomologist) as *Myrmecia vindex*.—
EDITOR.]